



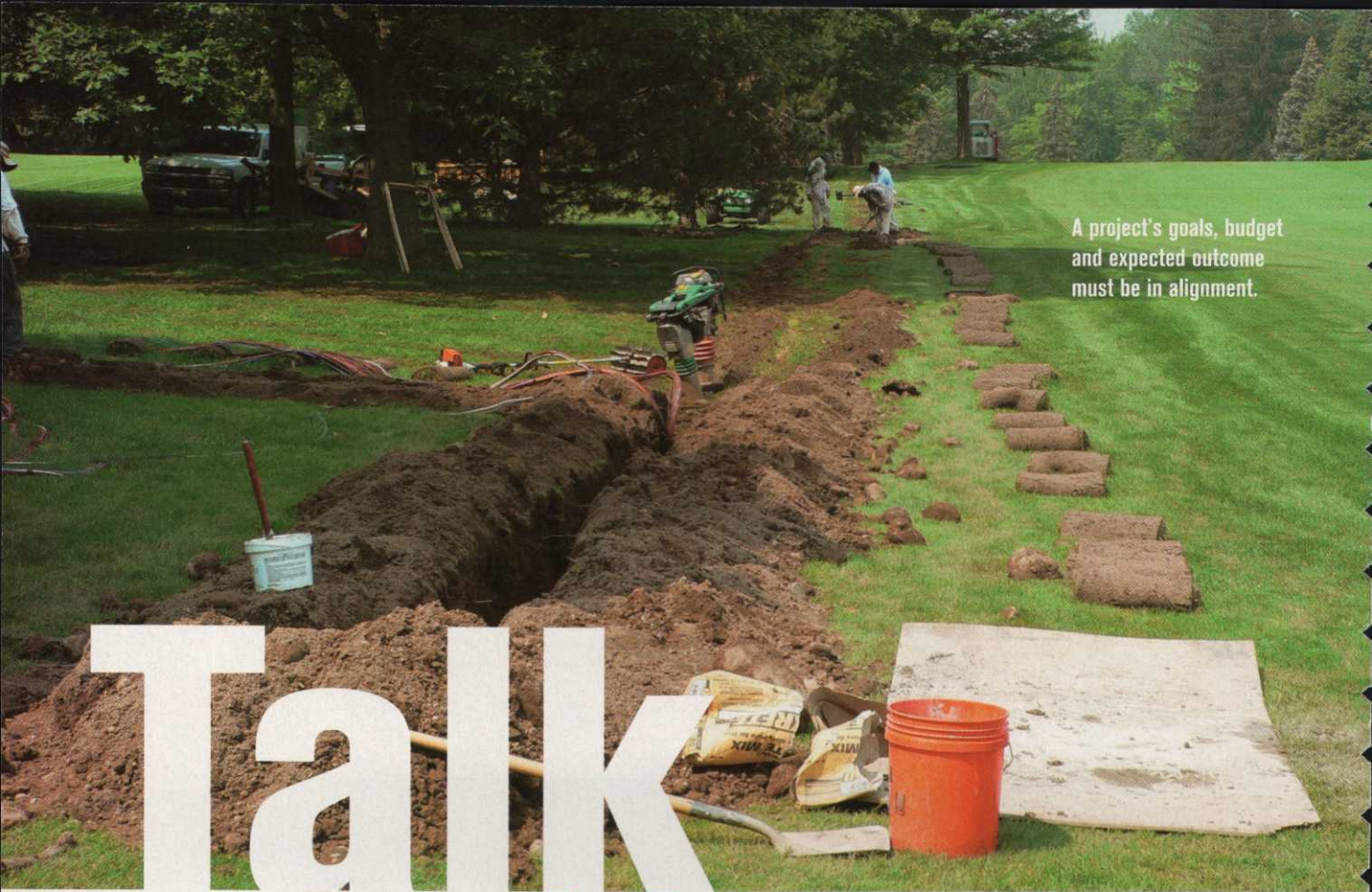
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A project's goals, budget and expected outcome must be in alignment.

Talk It Up

Clear communication is crucial to carry out a successful golf course renovation project

By Lloyd von Scheliha

Editor's note: This is part one of a two-part series on what it takes to achieve a successful golf course renovation. Part two runs in October. The author, Lloyd von Scheliha, is the marketing manager for Rain Bird.

The foundation of any successful relationship is communication. Whether it is with a spouse, child or boss, effective communication is key to developing trust, fostering understanding and addressing problems when they come up.

Communication is just as critical when a golf course undertakes a renovation project. Regardless of the type of course or size of the project, effective communication between the superintendent and all other stakeholders remains a cornerstone for success.

Unfortunately, there is no silver bullet when it comes to effective communication during a renovation. What works at one club might not work at another. However, super-

intendents who have been through the process can provide valuable insight. In this article, superintendents discuss the importance of how open and clear communication is critical to aligning expectations, addressing the audience, determining message frequency and obtaining feedback.

Align expectations

Setting clear and realistic goals is vital in the initial stages of the project development process. Since there are various reasons why a project is undertaken, there is no easy formula for setting goals. However, fundamentally, the project goals, budget and expected outcome must be in alignment. This seems like common sense, but often the project

goals and expected outcome do not line up with the approved budget.

This was the experience Mike Petty had when working on a nine-hole renovation and nine-hole addition at Omni Tucson National in Tucson, Ariz. The facility was originally 27 holes and was expanded to two distinct 18-hole courses — one parkland-style and one desert-style.

Early in the renovation planning, Petty realized that the budget was not going to achieve the expected outcome. Petty and club ownership had to look critically at the budget and plan, and the owners had to decide if they wanted to lower the expectations, raise the budget or both. As it turned out, the goals did not change, but the budget nearly doubled. Frank discussion allowed for an alignment on expectations, which led to a positive outcome.

Petty believes that it is critical to assemble a strong project team for a course renovation. A mix of team members who have expertise and experience in course renovations adds to the credibility of the superintendent and the project's success.

Know your audience

The process of gaining support also varies significantly from project to project. In the early stages of a renovation project, it is valuable to communicate in terms that are understood by the audience.

Rick Slattery, superintendent of Locust Hill Country Club in Pittsford, N.Y., had to explain the need for a renovation to the membership. He accomplished this by conducting a series of membership forums. Slattery explained why course renovation was necessary by putting it in the day-to-day experiences on the course.

During the forums, Slattery addressed course conditions, what issues the maintenance staff was having and how those issues affected playability on the course. He then went through the proposed renovations and how they would address the course's challenging areas. Finally, he gave a realistic picture of the renovation's time frame, how play would be affected during construction and the expected cost for the project.

Communicating in these terms resonated with the membership. The approval rate for the project went from about 45 percent before the forums to more than 92 percent after the forums.

"Many good projects have failed due to poor communication," says Jeff Markow, the certified golf course superintendent for Cypress Point Club in Pebble Beach, Calif. Markow makes the point that, when dealing with management, boards or members, too much agronomic information can be overwhelming.

It is also important for superintendents to set clear expectations that delays can and most probably will happen. There are things that come up that are outside of anyone's control, no matter how well a project is planned. When a delay happens, it should not come as a surprise.

Frequency

When it comes to communicating updates on a project, there is only one guideline: There is no such thing as too much communication. Here are a few ways to help superintendents effectively communicate with their membership:

- Be the first one with information ... good or bad — There are a number of reasons why it is important for superintendents to be the first to break any news. It reinforces credibility that the superintendent is on top of the project, helps avoid rumors from starting and ensures the correct information is being communicated.

- Use a variety of methods to communicate updates — Using different means of communication will ensure that everyone is getting the updates. Slattery used a combination of methods, including writing a column in the monthly newsletter, posting weekly notices in pro shop and locker rooms, posting signs on the course so golfers knew what renovations were taking place at each hole, and placing a big map of the course in the clubhouse that indicated the renovation's progress.

- Be prepared to repeat information — Superintendents should be ready to give information early and often.

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A sign is a simple and effective way to communicate.



A map placed in the clubhouse can educate golfers on a project's progress.

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■ Updates with Management — There should be a shared understanding with club management on the content, format and frequency of project updates. Managers must also understand that quick response may be required when a decision needs to be made on their end. Setting these expectations in the beginning will ensure the communication is clear, timely and on target.

Feedback

It's important for superintendents to frequently collect feedback from key stakeholders as renovation progresses. One way to accomplish this is for the superintendent to have a committee that can help communicate updates to members. This also acts as a feedback mechanism for the superintendent. Gaining feedback is a way to gauge member satisfaction or dissatisfaction with a project's progress.

It is also valuable to engage members when feasible. For example, if there is a

member who is a general contactor, he or she can help review contracts, set expectations and identify potential pitfalls. Utilizing the expertise of the members will help them to have some ownership in the outcome. However, this can be a double-edged sword so it should be done with a clear understanding that the member is there to give perspective, not make decisions.

And finally ...

The importance of communication in a renovation project cannot be overemphasized. Effective communication is accomplished in part by aligning expectations, understanding the different audiences, frequently updating the audiences and receiving valuable feedback. Implementing these elements will make all the difference in guiding the course to successful renovation. ■

Lloyd von Scheliha can be reached at lvonscheliha@rainbird.com.

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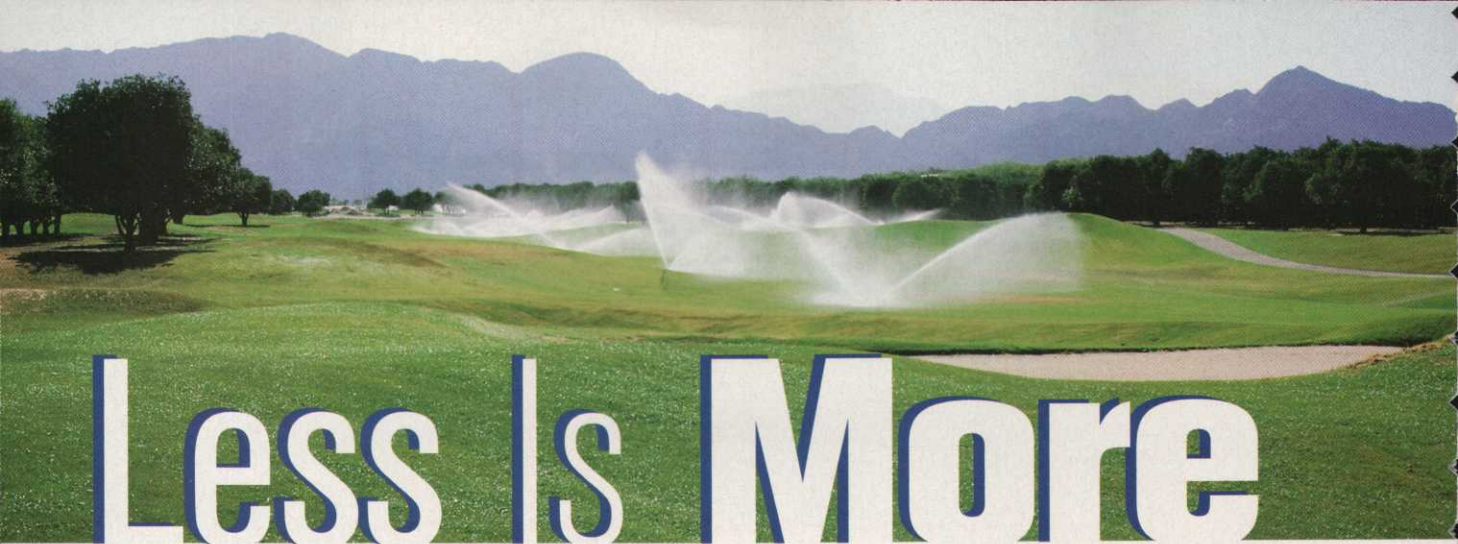
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Less Is More

Frequent, light irrigation works best for fairways

By Anthony Pioppi, Contributing Editor

Their soil profiles are vastly different, but their irrigation practices are remarkably similar. The Ekwanok Club's 18 holes are nestled in the Green Mountain National Forest of central Vermont, which confronts Ted Maddocks with a varied soil profile: Half his course is sand-based, and the other half is much heavier.

In central Oregon, Mark Shepard spends his days maintaining a course built on a cornucopia of rock that comes within 3 inches of the surface in some spots, not exactly ideal growing conditions.

Jeff Johnson enjoys excellent soil and a good amount of annual rainfall at the Minikahda Club in Minneapolis.

The land on which Wellshire Golf Club in Denver is built might be just fine, but the arid conditions produce an average of 17 inches of rain a year, and water use can be heavily restricted.

What the four have in common, though, is their approach to irrigation of their fairways. Light and frequent is the way to go, they say.

"For me it's mostly about being firm and dry without sacrificing the turf," Johnson says.

A few years ago, Minikahda, a 1917 Donald Ross design, underwent a restoration overseen by architect Ron Prichard. Staying away from soft playing conditions is part of the club's goal to reinstate the Ross style.

"Let the ball roll into the bunkers, let it roll into the rough," Johnson says.

An irrigation system installed as part of the restoration allows Johnson to irrigate more efficiently while using less water. Tree removal also improved the quality of turf and allowed him to cut back on water in areas.

Although he has no water conservation issues, Johnson still tries to use as little as possible. He usually puts down about one-tenth of an inch, maxing out at one-quarter of an inch in rare instances.

"It's the proper thing to do," he says.

Maddocks has much the same idea, but his philosophy of light but frequent does not have to extend course wide on the Walter Travis design that dates to 1899.

On the part of Ekwanok that is perched on gravelly soil, he can irrigate up to five times a week during the heat of summer, and golf cars can safely travel the fairways less than 24 hours after a storm that drops massive amounts of rain. The heavy soil areas can go two years without seeing the heads come on.

The water supply is from wells on the property that do not produce in large volumes and that, at times, can force Maddocks' hand.

"If it needs it, I water it," he says, being careful not to put his most-needy areas at risk.

On his dry fairways, Maddocks will put down two-tenths of an inch five times a week, sometimes more depending on the evapotranspiration rate. His irrigation system was installed in 1997 in response to a severe drought two years before.

"On bright, sunny days with wind, I'm losing two-tenths of an inch," he says.

When he irrigates his wetter fairways, it is at a rate of about one-tenth of an inch.

At Wellshire Golf Club, owned by the city of Denver, Colo., superintendent Greg Blew's irrigation program is often out of his control. That part of Colorado usually receives between 15 inches and 17 inches of rain a year, but it's experiencing an extended drought. He too believes in light and frequent irrigation, but in 2001 the program became "not at all" because water authorities forbade golf courses from irrigating fairways with potable water.

Reclaimed water was not limited. Blew upped his height of cut from eleven-sixteenths to 1 inch and watched as the ground dried and cracked, and turf died on the 1926 Ross design. He did get lucky when a storm dumped enough rain to raise his own retention pond 12 inches.

Normally Blew irrigates his turf — bluegrass with *Poa* mixed in — nightly at a rate of about one-fifteenth of an inch. The

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Less Is More

Some superintendents like to irrigate for a firm and dry course.

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course is perched on a clay base. "The bluegrass is very resilient," he says.

Blew came to the course in 1993 just as the installation of the irrigation system was being completed.

There can be but a few superintendents in the United States who face the trials and tribulations of fairway irrigation that confronts Mark Shepherd at his course, Aspen Lakes Golf Club in Bend, Ore., known for its red bunker sand made from crushed volcanic rock.

Located just east of the Cascade Range, the course receives about 10 inches to 12 inches of rain a year.

"It's not what people expect when they hear Oregon," Shepherd said.

It is what his course is built on that causes the problems. At times, barely a little more than 3 inches below the turf is a base of volcanic rock, glacial boulders or slate, so close to the sur-

face that he cannot aerate more than 2 inches. When the course was built in 1996, a rock saw was used to cut trenches for irrigation and drainage pipe, quite a different site than Bandon Dunes, which was built and grown in on the sandy soils of the central Oregon Coast. Aspen Lakes is wall-to-wall bentgrass with Dominant used on the fairways.

The rock causes many problems, not the least of which is that on extremely hot days the rock can absorb heat, which it then radiates back at night, effectively drying the turf nearly 24 hours a day. When the rains do come, and the temperatures change, so do the conditions.

"We can go from really dry to really wet in a matter of days," Shepherd said. "It's quite a balancing act."

His irrigation program is reacting to the current state of affairs.

According to Shepherd, he waters nightly beginning in early June continuing through late September with additional hand-watering as needed. His shallow soils plus subsurface rock does not allow for much stored water. In the heat of the summer his water consumption reaches between 800,000 and 1 million gallons per night.

"We're really running right on the edge," Shepherd said.

He keeps from falling off, in part, by light and frequent irrigating. ■

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Monday	7	1/2	3:30	Brentwood	Gen	8
Tuesday	7	1/2	3:30	"	"	9
Wednesday	7	1/2	4	"	"	8 1/2
Thursday	7	1/2	4	Crestview	"	8 1/2
Friday	7	1/2	4	"	"	8 1/2

Employee Signature: *David B.* Total Hours: **41 1/2**

WHEN YOU CAN HAVE THIS.

Employee Report

Burns, David Date Range: 4/9/2007 through 4/13/2007

Day	Date	Jobsite	Start	Stop	Cost Code	Hours	Total
Mon	4/9	Brentwood 1	7:08 AM	12:05 PM	Placing The Pin	4:57	7:38 hours
			12:41 PM	3:22 PM	Bunker	2:41	
Tue	4/10	Brentwood 1	7:12 AM	12:07 PM	Placing The Pin	4:55	7:35 hours
			12:43 PM	3:23 PM	Mowing	2:40	
Wed	4/11	Brentwood 1	7:12 AM	12:02 PM	Placing The Pin	4:50	7:53 hours
			12:46 PM	3:49 PM	Bunker	3:03	
Thu	4/12	Brentwood 2	7:17 AM	12:19 PM	Placing The Pin	5:02	7:58 hours
			12:50 PM	3:46 PM	Bunker	2:56	
Fri	4/13	Brentwood 2	7:13 AM	12:07 PM	Placing The Pin	4:54	7:49 hours
			12:44 PM	3:39 PM	Mowing	2:55	
Total						38:53 hours	

Signature: *David B.* Burns, David

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PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Hamilton Farm Golf Club named **Ray Viera** its director of grounds. The 30-year turf manager comes from Four Streams Golf Club, with eight years of tournament experience as assistant superintendent at the famed Shinnecock Hills Golf Club.

Superintendent **Doug Petersan** is now working with Nutramax Laboratories. He will provide provide economic advice and guidance for Nutramax customers and distributors in Texas and the Southwest. Petersan recently retired as superintendent at Austin Golf Club, a private facility designed by Ben Crenshaw and Bill Coore in Austin, Texas.

PGA Professional **Craig Swidersky** was appointed director of golf at Bahía Beach Resort & Golf Club in Puerto Rico. Swidersky formally served as the golf project manager for Bahia Beach.

Profile Products LLC welcomes **John Ferguson** as Southeast regional sales manager for Turface Athletics and Profile Golf products. The company also added **Keith Rose** to the DryJect LLC team as a territory manager for New Jersey.

PBI/Gordon Corp. appointed **Mark Welterlen** new product development manager. Welterlen has 40 years in the green industry with technical, business, marketing and hands-on grounds-care experience. He will identify market needs and evaluate new chemistry and formulations.

ClubCorp appointed new vice presidents to its country club division. **Chuck Feddersen**, formerly a ClubCorp regional manager, was named regional vice president of the Southern California/Desert region. **John Woodeshick** was appointed regional vice president for the South Texas

region of golf and country clubs. Woodeshick previously served as executive vice president of operations and development at Touchstone Golf LLC. **Gordon Digby** is the new regional vice president of operations in the Mid-Atlantic region; his experience includes serving as the Navy golf director, where he oversaw 39 courses worldwide.

Canyon Communications of Mesa, Ariz., promoted **Jared Bodnar** to vice president. Bodnar will help direct the advertising/public relations agency's future strategic direction, client services, new business development and personnel.

BASF Specialty Products Department named **Todd Burkdoll** market development specialist supporting turf & ornamental markets in the Western United States. He'll work with BASF sales representatives, distributors, university cooperators and end users to facilitate BASF product stewardship, innovation and leadership in the field. BASF also appointed **Travis Klosterboer** as sales specialist for Texas, Oklahoma and New Mexico.

Tom McDonald is the new vice president of sales and marketing for the Yamaha Golf-Car Co., based in Newnan, Ga.

Doral Golf Resort & Spa, A Marriott Resort, named **Nathan Stith** director of golf operations. Stith oversees five championship golf courses, including golf shop operations, retail merchandising, outings, tournaments, and preparation for Doral's PGA TOUR event, the WGC-CA Championship.

Clarification: The foundation of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America is the Environmental Institute for Golf.

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